

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 TOKYO 16298 01 OF 02 021243Z

47

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

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R 020620Z NOV 76

FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3319

INFO SECDEF WASHDC

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

COMUSJAPAN

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TOKYO 16298

CINCPAC FOR POLAD ALSO

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINR, MPOL, MARR, JA

SUBJECT: REFLECTIONS ON THE MIG-25 INCIDENT

SUMMARY: PROCESS OF SORTING OUT PROBLEMS ATTENDANT UPON  
DISPOSITION OF DEFECTING MIG-25 AFTER ITS LANDING  
SEPTEMBER 6 AND ITS SUBSEQUENT EXPLOITATION WAS USEFUL  
IN ADUMBRATING WORKINGS OF JAPANESE BUREAUCRACY AND  
ILLUSTRATING JAPANESE ATTITUDES SIGNIFICANT FOR CONDUCT  
OF JAPANESE-U.S. RELATIONS IN SECURITY AND OTHER FIELDS.  
LEGITIMACY OF SELF-DEFENSE FORCE (JSDF) ROLE WAS  
PUBLICLY ACCEPTED EARLY IN GAME AND INDICATED EXTENT  
TO WHICH SECURITY QUESTIONS HAVE BEEN DESENSITIZED OVER  
PAST FEW YEARS. GOJ, NONETHELESS, FACED DELICATE TASK  
IN CONDITIONING OPINION TO NEED TO HOLD PLANE FOR  
THOROUGH EXPLOITATION, IN WHICH THERE WOULD BE U.S.  
PARTICIPATION. WHILE CONFLICTING SIGNALS SEEMED TO  
RESULT, REFLECTING IN PART NARROW CONCERNS OF SOME  
SEGMENTS OF BUREAUCRACY, TOP GOJ LEADERSHIP HAVING  
GIVEN US COMMITMENT ON PARTICIPATION KEPT ITS WORD. IN  
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PAGE 02 TOKYO 16298 01 OF 02 021243Z

ORDER TO MAKE GOOD ON PROMISES, HOWEVER, IT WAS

NECESSARY THROUGHOUT AFFAIR FOR GOJ TO MAINTAIN OFFICIAL POSITION OF BEING FULLY IN CHARGE, WITH ANY U.S. ASSISTANCE FURNISHED ON JAPANESE TERMS AND AT JAPANESE REQUEST.

SOME OF JAPANESE RATIONALE AND PROCEDURES WERE CUMBERSOME AND LED TO FRUSTRATIONS CAUSING OUTSIDERS TO SEE GOJ AS VACILLATING, BUT IN THIS INSTANCE, AS IN MANY OTHERS, WE FOUND IT NECESSARY TO ACCEPT GOJ RITUAL OR AIRING CONTRARY LEGAL POSITIONS WHILE CONTINUING TO COOPERATE TO MEET U.S. DESIDERATA. HEAVY-HANDED SOVIET BEHAVIOR MADE SUCH COOPERATION EASIER. JAPANESE HAVE BEEN DRAWING OWN LESSONS FROM INCIDENT, INCLUDING NEED TO ENGAGE SDF AT EARLIER STAGE AND REQUIREMENT FOR MORE RAPID COMMUNICATION. SHOULD SIMILAR AFFAIR OCCUR IN FUTURE, WE WOULD ANTICIPATE SMOOTHER GOJ APPROACH, BUT EVEN SO, THERE IS A CERTAIN PACE TO GOJ DECISION-MAKING THAT CANNOT BE FORCED. ON U.S. SIDE, IT SOON BECAME CLEAR THAT CENTRALIZED COORDINATION WAS ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL BOTH IN REGARD TO EXPLOITATION ITSELF AND TO BE CERTAIN RECOMMENDATIONS TO WASHINGTON, APPROACHES TO GOJ, AND ENSUING U.S.-GENERATED PUBLICITY WERE NOT IN CONFLICT. END SUMMARY.

1. NOW THAT THE MOG-25 IS CRATED AND AWAITING RETURN TO ITS OWNERS, APPROXIMATELY TWO MONTHS AFTER ITS UNEXPECTED LANDING AT HAKODATE, IT MAY BE WORTH REFLECTING ON THE MANNER IN WHICH THE AFFAIR WAS TREATED BY GOJ, BOTH FOR LESSONS TO BE LEARNED IN REGARD TO MACHINATIONS OF JAPANESE BUREAUCRACY AND FOR ADDITIONAL LIGHT SHED ON SOME CURRENT JAPANESE ATTITUDES.

2. DESENSITIZATION OF SECURITY QUESTIONS. ALTHOUGH, AS ADDRESSEES AWARE, MANNER IN WHICH GOJ EXERCISED CONTROL OVER AIRCRAFT AND ITS SUBSEQUENT EXPLOITATION WAS SUBJECT OF PROLONGED INTER-MINISTERIAL DISCUSSION AS WELL AS DIET HEARINGS, JAPANESE SELF-DEFENSE FORCE (JSDF) ROLE ONCE ASSUMED WAS NEVER SERIOUSLY QUESTIONED, AND MEDIA, THROUGH ABSENCE OF CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 TOKYO 16298 01 OF 02 021243Z

CRITICISM OF SELF-DEFENSE FORCES, TACITLY ACCEPTED LEGITIMACY OF JSDF ACTIONS. IN PART, THIS HAPPY RESULT WAS ATTRIBUTABLE TO JUDICIOUS DEALINGS WITH PRESS BY JAPAN DEFENSE AGENCY (JDA) ITSELF. JDA USED STAGED PRESS LEAKS TO MAXIMUM ADVANTAGE IN CONDITIONING PUBLIC OPINION TO ACCEPT LEGITIMACY OF JDA EXERCISE OF JURISDICTION; NEED TO HOLD PLANE FOR LONGER PERIOD THAN AT FIRST PUBLICLY ACKNOWLEDGED; AND

IMPORTANCE OF U.S. COOPERATION IN JAPANESE EXPLOITATION OF AIRCRAFT. WHILE GOJ, ESPECIALLY MOFA, EXHIBITED CONSIDERABLE NERVOUSNESS ABOUT ITS PUBLIC POSTURE -- REFLECTING BOTH KNOWN AND ASSUMED ATTITUDES OF PRIME MINISTER AS WELL AS DELICATE POLITICAL MANEUVERING IN DIET -- GOVERNMENT EXPERIENCED NO SIGNIFICANT PUBLIC RELATIONS MISHAPS. ACCEPTANCE OF GOJ POSITIONS RE MIG FIT PATTERN OF INCREASED EQUANIMITY WITH WHICH SECURITY QUESTIONS SUCH AS PROCUREMENT, LEVEL OF DEFENSE BUDGET, AND U.S.-JAPAN DEFENSE COOPERATION HAVE COME TO BE DISCUSSED. A FEW YEARS AGO, MIG DISPOSITION WOULD HAVE BEEN FOCUS OF MUCH SHARPER DEBATE-- THIS TIME THERE WERE NO "YES, BUT..." EDITORIALS.

3. A MUTUAL SECURITY MATTER.

WHILE THERE WAS DISINCLINATION TO MAKE PUBLIC STATEMENTS TO EFFECT THAT EXPLOITATION OF MIG WOULD BE TREATED AS A MATTER OF MUTUAL U.S.-JAPAN SECURITY INTEREST, THIS WAS PREMISE ON WHICH TOP JAPANESE LEVELS OF BOTH MOFA AND JDA OPERATED FROM START. EMBASSY RECEIVED PRIVATE ASSURANCES EARLY IN GAME THAT GOJ WOULD SEE TO IT THAT ARRANGEMENTS WOULD BE MADE FOR U.S. TO HAVE NECESSARY ACCESS TO PLANE. PROCESS OF CONDITIONING PUBLIC OPINION LED TO SOME DELAYS AND WAS PARTLY RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT MAY HAVE SEEMED TO BE CONFLICTING SIGNALS, BUT EARLY COMMITMENTS TO US WERE FULLY HONORED -- NOT BECAUSE THEY MET A U.S. INTEREST OR U.S. HAD ANY SPECIAL RIGHTS, BUT BECAUSE JAPANESE WERE CONVINCED IT WAS IN OUR MUTUAL INTEREST.

4. WITHIN MOFA, HOWEVER, CERTAIN AMOUNT OF CLIENTITIS DEVELOPED, WITH AMERICAN AFFAIRS BUREAU SUPPORTING U.S. ROLE IN EXPLOITATION FOR SOME  
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PAGE 04 TOKYO 16298 01 OF 02 021243Z

REASONABLE PERIOD WHILE EUROPEAN AFFAIRS BUREAU FAVORED EARLY RETURN OF AIRCRAFT SO AS NOT TO MUDDY JAPAN'S RELATIONS WITH SOVIET UNION. JDA, IN TURN, FAVORED MORE AGGRESSIVE EXPLOITATION THAN MOFA. IN THIS SITUATION, AND IN ABSENCE OF FORTHRIGHT GUIDANCE FROM MIKI, DECISIONS COULD NOT BE MADE WITHOUT TIME-CONSUMING INTER-MINISTERIAL MEETINGS AND REFERRAL TO PRIMIN. LESSON, HOWEVER, WHICH APPLIES IN MANY AREAS, IS THAT ONCE COMMITMENT HAS BEEN MADE AT SENIOR LEVEL, IN THIS INSTANCE BY FOREIGN MINISTER AND VICE MINISTER, AND JDA MINISTER AND VICE MINISTER. EVENTUAL DECISIONS ALL WORK OUT TO OUR SATISFACTION DESPITE FRUSTRATIONS ALONG THE WAY. EXPRESSION OF TOP-LEVEL US INTEREST IN HAVING FULL ACCESS TO MIG WAS ALSO OF GREAT ASSISTANCE.

5. JAPANESE MAINTAINED CONTROL.

OTHER SIDE OF MUTUAL-SECURITY-INTEREST COIN WAS  
GOJ IMPERATIVE TO REMAIN IN CHARGE. THIS WAS POLITICALLY  
NECESSARY IN TERMS OF PUBLIC OPINION AND TO AVOID  
PROVOKING POLITICAL OPPOSITION, BUT IT ALSO REFLECTED  
GENUINE NATIONAL SENSITIVITY. THUS GOJ WAS AT PAINS  
TO HAVE SCENARIO INDICATE AT ALL STAGES THAT JDA WAS  
IN FULL CONTROL OF AIRCRAFT INVESTIGATION, THAT U.S.  
PERSONNEL HAD BEEN MADE AVAILABLE IN A SUBORDINATE  
ADVISORY ROLE, AND THAT DISPOSITION OF INTELLIGENCE  
GAINED WAS A JAPANESE PREROGATIVE. IT WAS ALSO  
REASON WHY GOJ HAS INSISTED ON REIMBURSING U.S. FOR  
TRANSPORTATION AND EXPLOITATION COSTS, AND WHY GOJ  
HAS BEEN SO ULTRA-SENSITIVE ABOUT OFFICIAL STATEMENTS ON  
MIG EVALUATION EMANATING  
FROM U.S. SIDE, EVEN WHILE MUCH INFORMATION WAS  
BEING LEAKED BY JAPANESE.

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PAGE 01 TOKYO 16298 02 OF 02 021257Z

47

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01

ACDA-07 TRSE-00 /076 W

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FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 TOKYO 16298

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6. PROCEDURES EVOLVED MAY HAVE BEEN CUMBERSOME AND  
COULD IMPRESS OUTSIDERS AS SO THINLY VEILED A SUB-

TERFUGE AS TO BE MEANINGLESS. MOREOVER, ELABORATE JAPANESE RITUAL FOR MEETING DIET INTERPELLATION AND CONDITIONING PUBLIC OPINION RUNS RISK OF CONTRADICTORY SIGNALS WHICH CAUSE SOME OUTSIDERS TO SEE GOJ AS VACILLATING OR "UNTRUSTWORTHY." IT IS NECESSARY, HOWEVER, TO UNDERSTAND IMPORTANCE GOJ ATTACHES TO PLAYING GAME BY THEIR RULES, AND DISTINCTION BETWEEN OFFICIAL PUBLIC JAPANESE POSITIONS AND ACTUAL SITUATION. WE WERE UNABLE TO ACCEPT GOJ VIEW THAT U.S. PERSONNEL DETAILED TO JDA RELINQUISHED THEIR SOFA STATUS (FORTUNATELY NO INCIDENTS AROSE THAT WOULD HAVE SURFACED OUR AGREEMENT TO DISAGREE), BUT OTHERWISE PRICE OF PLAYING BY JAPANESE RULES WAS NOT ONEROUS AND GAVE RESULTS WE NEEDED. EMBASSY FINDS IT ROUTINELY FACES SITUATIONS IN WHICH MOFA, HAVING POINTED UP CONTRARY LEGAL POSITIONS, FINDS A WAY OF COOPERATING TO MEET US DESIDERATA, PARTICULARLY IN SECURITY FIELD. IT CANNOT ALWAYS COMPLY WITH OUR REQUESTS, CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 TOKYO 16298 02 OF 02 021257Z

BUT ONCE WORD IS GIVEN, WE CAN ALMOST ALWAYS RELY ON IT. THIS WAS SO IN CASE OF THE MIG-25.

7. SOVIETS HELPED MAKE IT EASY.

JAPANESE CASE THAT AN AIRCRAFT LANDED BY DEFECTOR CONSTITUTED SOVIET INTRUSION OF SOVEREIGN AIR SPACE AND TERRITORY IN VIOLATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL LAW MIGHT NOT HAVE BEEN OVERLY LOGICAL, BUT IT GAINED CREDIBILITY AS RESULT OF APPALLING SOVIET INSENSITIVITY TO JAPANESE SENTIMENT. THERE HAS NEVER BEEN ANY LOVE FOR RUSSIANS IN JAPAN, BUT SOVIET INABILITY TO COUPLE DEMARCHES FOR RETURN OF PILOT AND PLANE WITH APOLOGY FOR INCIDENT, EVEN IN FACE OF DAILY PRESS INVITATIONS TO DO SO, STRUCK BOTH JAPANESE OFFICIALS AND MAN-IN-THE-STREET AS CALLOUS DISREGARD FOR INTERNATIONAL PROPRIETY. GROMYKO'S COLD TREATMENT OF KOSAKA IN NEW YORK -- "HE DIDN'T EVEN OFFER ME A GLASS OF WATER" -- COMPOUNDED ANTI-SOVIET FEELING. IN VIEW OF CONCERN IN SOME GOJ CIRCLES ABOUT EFFECT OF INCIDENT ON JAPAN-SOVIET RELATIONS, WE WOULD GUESS THAT PRESSURE FOR EARLY RETURN OF MIG-25 WOULD HAVE BUILT UP RAPIDLY HAD SOVIETS DONE "THE RIGHT THING." (IN CONTRAST, PROMPT EXPRESSION OF U.S. REGRET ABOUT REENACTMENT OF HIROSHIMA BOMBING COOLED WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN A RANKLING IRRITANT IN OUR RELATIONS).

8. MINIMAL IMPACT ON LONG-TERM SOVIET RELATIONS.

AS IT SEEMS TO BE TURNING OUT, JAPANESE HAVE FOUND THAT IT WILL PROBABLY BE POSSIBLE TO ISOLATE AFFAIR FROM MAIN COURSE OF JAPANESE-SOVIET RELATIONS. DIRECT

SOVIET THREATS AGAINST JAPAN CAN ONLY FURTHER ANTAGONIZE ALL SEGMENTS OF PUBLIC ALREADY ANNOYED BY ADAMANT RUSSIAN STAND ON NORTHERN TERRITORIES AND CONTINUED SEIZURE OF JAPANESE FISHING VESSELS; IT MEANS LITTLE TO SLOW DOWN ECONOMIC COOPERATION THAT HAS NOT BEEN MOVING AT MUCH OF A PACE IN THE FIRST PLACE; AND OTHER SOVIET RETALIATORY TOOLS SEEM LIMITED. MAINTENANCE OF FAIRLY NORMAL RELATIONS, APART FROM POSTPONEMENT OF A VISIT OR TWO, SEEM TO INDICATE SOVIET AWARENESS OF THEIR DILEMMA.

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PAGE 03 TOKYO 16298 02 OF 02 021257Z

9. JAPANESE CAPACITY FOR BUREAUCRATIZATION. IN ABSENCE OF PRE-EXISTING GUIDELINES OR IMMEDIATE TOP-LEVEL DECISION OF DISPOSITION OF AIRCRAFT AFTER ITS LANDING, JAPANESE POLICE TOOK TEMPORARY CHARGE OF SITUATION AND INCIDENT WAS TREATED AS CRIMINAL ACTION TO BE PURSUED BY OFFICE OF PUBLIC PROCURATOR. WHILE THIS PROVIDED INGENIOUS RATIONALE FOR HOLDING PLANE AND PILOT LONG ENOUGH TO GIVE GOJ TIME TO SORT OUT AFFAIR -- INVESTIGATION OF ILLEGAL ENTRY, ILLEGAL IMPORTATION OF FIREARMS, ETC. -- IT COMPLICATED EARLY TRANSFER OF JURISDICTION TO JDA. WE HAVE BEEN INFORMED THAT IF SIMILAR INCIDENT OCCURRED IN FUTURE, JDA WOULD ASSUME CONTROL FROM THE START, AND PRESS REPORTS TO THIS EFFECT HAVE NOT BEEN CHALLENGED. INCIDENT INDICATED DIFFICULTY OF IMPROVISATION IN COUNTRY ACCUSTOMED TO TRUST MAJOR DECISIONS TO BUREAUCRACY, AND WHILE LATTER ARE LIKELY TO FIND A RULE FOR EVERY CIRCUMSTANCE, IT MAY NOT ALWAYS BE THE ONE MOST DESIRED. (CUSTOMS OFFICIALS AT ONE POINT WISHED TO ASSESS DUTY ON AIRCRAFT.) AS RESULT OF EXPERIENCE WITH MIG, INTERNAL JAPANESE PROCEDURES FOR FUTURE AFFAIRS OF THIS ORDER WOULD DOUBTLESS WORK MORE SMOOTHLY, BUT PERHAPS NO MORE RAPIDLY. THERE IS A CERTAIN PACE TO GOJ DECISION-MAKING, EVEN UNDER PRESSURE, WHICH CANNOT BE FORCED.

10. ONE BUREAUCRATIC LESSON FOR JAPANESE SIDE WAS NEED FOR MORE RAPID, RELIABLE COMMUNICATION TO TOP LEADERSHIP WHEN UNEXPECTED INCIDENT OCCURS. THERE WAS DELAY OF TWO OR THREE HOURS AFTER MIG LANDED BEFORE TOP JDA OFFICIALS, INCLUDING MINISTER, WERE NOTIFIED, AND BY THAT TIME IT WAS PROBABLY TOO LATE FOR THEM TO HAVE TAKEN CONTROL OF SITUATION HAD THEY BEEN PREPARED TO DO SO.

11. ENHANCED CONCIOUSNESS OF JAPAN'S VULNERABILITY. DIET INTERPELLATIONS AND MEDIA HAVE DWELT AT SOME

LENGTH ON ABILITY OF MIG-25 DEEPLY TO PENETRATE JAPANESE  
AIR SPACE UNOBSERVED. APART FROM DIFFICULTY OF SPOTTING  
LOW-FLYING AIRCRAFT, IMPRESSION LEFT WITH PUBLIC IS  
THAT THERE IS NEED TO STRENGTHEN JDA DETECTION AND AIR-  
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PAGE 04 TOKYO 16298 02 OF 02 021257Z

DEFENSE CAPABILITIES, A CONCLUSION NOT ALTOGETHER  
DISPLEASING TO OFFICIALS FACED WITH PRESENTATION OF  
BUDGET COVERING FX PROCUREMENT. SECOND DEFENSE ISSUE  
HIGHLIGHTED BY INCIDENT IS RESTRICTIVE NATURE OF  
CURRENT RULES OF ENGAGEMENT. THESE HAVE DEEP CON-  
STITUTIONAL ROOTS, BUT IN EFFECT ENJOIN MEANINGFUL  
AIR DEFENSE UNTIL AFTER SOME DAMAGE HAS BEEN SUFFERED,  
E.G., "DO NOT FIRE UNTIL FIRED UPON."

12. CENTRALIZED U.S. CONTROL OF EXPLOITATION.  
IT IS OUR IMPRESSION THAT ARRANGEMENTS FOR SHARING  
DATA ON MIG WITH GOJ ARE WORKING OUT SATISFACTORILY AND  
NO EFFORT IS MADE HERE TO DRAW ANY LESSONS FROM  
EXPERIENCE IN JOINT EXPLOITATION. IT BECAME CLEAR  
VERY EARLY IN GAME, HOWEVER, THAT WITH SEVERAL U.S.  
GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AND SERVICE COMPONENTS VITALLY  
INTERESTED IN MIG INTELLIGENCE PRIZE, CENTRALIZED  
COORDINATION WAS ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL, NOT ONLY TO  
ASSURE COORDINATED TECHNICAL APPROACH, BUT TO BE CERTAIN  
THAT RECOMMENDATIONS TO WASHINGTON, APPROACHES TO GOJ  
AND ENSUING U.S. GENERATED PUBLICITY WERE NOT IN  
CONFLICT. MECHANISM FOR THIS PURPOSE EVOLVED  
OVER FIRST FEW DAYS AFTER MIG LANDING. THEREAFTER  
IT WAS LARGELY SATISFACTORY.  
HODGSON

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## Message Attributes

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**TAGS:** PINR, MPOL, MARR, PINS, JA, US  
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